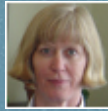




"V" is For... A Sustainable Legacy through Free Family Night



VISTA Rights and Responsibilities during Election Season

VISTA Viewfinder
Issue 13:
October 14, 2008

VISTA: Volunteers In Service To America
Since 1964, 175,000 Strong



VISTA
viewfinder



1 VISTA since 1964



2 Volunteers in Service



3 175,000 Strong



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V is for... Free Family Night at the Creative Discovery Museum

By Adrienne Royer

I arrived at the Creative Discovery Museum for a meeting and wondered why there was such a crowd there. "It's after 5:30," I thought. "Wasn't the Museum closed?" I turned a corner and stopped. The banner hanging over the entrance and the busy line of people trying to get through the door put a smile on my face. They were all there for Free Family Night.

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THE LANDSCAPE



VISTA Campus now launched!

Join AmeriCorps Alums—for current VISTAs too!
[Join now](#)

My AmeriCorps Portal: Is your information up-to-date?
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V Cafe Question of the Month: What neighborhood programs have you discovered that are having a positive effect in your community?
[answer now](#)

VISTA on MySpace:
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Adrienne Royer was a VISTA from 2004-2006 at the Creative Discovery Museum in Chattanooga, TN.

Three years earlier, I had helped create the monthly free night program that allowed at-risk and low-income families to visit the children's museum, while serving as the Museum's first VISTA. Based on a suggestion from CDM board members, who saw the concept at the Chicago Children's Museum, and developed from research conducted by The Association for Children's Museums, Free Family Night had the unique ability to make learning fun for kids, bring families together and offer local nonprofits and social service agencies the opportunities to reach out to their target audience in a non-threatening environment.

Now in its third year, the Free Family Night program annually serves more than 10,000 people. Through partnerships, government agencies, and nonprofits thousands of kids are now signed up for TENNdercare, Tennessee's health insurance program for children under 18 and Project Ready for School, a program that sent one book a month to kids from birth until his or her fifth birthday. Kids are also seen by the local Ronald McDonald House CareMobile, which provides free dental care, and parents are given information on healthy living, how to install car seats correctly, and free health screenings for cholesterol, heart disease and diabetes.

Aimed towards at-risk families, this program opens the door to an organization that is often inaccessible due to cost or social stigma. Through these monthly visits, kids can connect what they learn in the classroom to the world

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FAQ

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around them and discover that learning is fun.

Let the world know what “V” means to you:

To share your own “V is for” story or read more stories, visit the [VISTA Campus](#).

To share your own “V is for” photo or view others, visit VISTA on [Flickr](#).



To order your own “V” pin (limit one per VISTA), e-mail your name and address with “Order V pin” in the subject line to VISTAOutreach@cns.gov.

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A message from Jean Whaley



Dear VISTAs,

With the Presidential elections well underway, I want to

remind you of the Hatch Act. The Hatch Act is a law that addresses the rights of State and Federal employees and VISTAs to engage in certain political activities, while prohibiting other political activities.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE

A VISTA **may not** engage in political activity while on duty as a VISTA or when identifiable as a VISTA (e.g. while wearing VISTA clothing or logos, working in a venue where s/he will be recognized as a VISTA member or while using the vehicle of the VISTA project).

The issue of political activity and when a VISTA is identifiable as a member has subtle nuances and must be considered in the context of your community and project. For clarity's sake, we list below political activities in which a VISTA generally may or may not participate during his/her term of service, but please do not approach the list as a definitive checklist. If you are in doubt, please contact your local Corporation State Office representative.

A VISTA may (while not on duty and while not identifiable as a VISTA)

- register and vote as s/he chooses
- attend and be active at political rallies and meetings
- express opinions about candidates and issues
- contribute money to political organizations
- assist in voter registration drives
- sign nominating petitions
- distribute campaign literature in partisan elections
- campaign for or against referendum questions
- campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections
- drive voters to the polls (no project vehicle)
- attend political fundraising functions
- join and be an active member of a political party or club
- make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections
- hold office in political clubs or parties constitutional amendments, municipal ordinances
- be a candidate for public office in nonpartisan elections

A VISTA may not

- engage in political activity while on duty as a VISTA at a project, wearing a VISTA logo, or using a vehicle of the VISTA project or when identifiable as VISTA
- wear partisan political buttons while on duty as a VISTA
- use official authority or influence to interfere with an election
- solicit or discourage political activity of anyone with business before the VISTA sponsor or project where

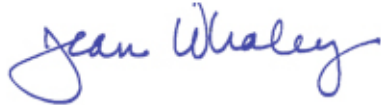
- they serve
- solicit or receive political contributions while in their VISTA service term
- be a candidate for public office in partisan elections

Penalties for Hatch Act violations

The Office of Special Counsel (OSC), an independent agency of the federal government, enforces the Hatch Act for State and Federal employees and VISTAs. The OSC determines penalties for Hatch Act violations. Any VISTA who violates the Hatch Act may be subject to severe disciplinary action of at least 30 days' unpaid suspension and up to termination for cause from the VISTA program. Please visit <http://www.osc.gov/hatchact.htm> for additional information.

While you are exercising your free speech rights, be sure to keep the Hatch Act requirements in mind.

Sincerely



Jean Whaley
Director, VISTA

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Digital TV Is Coming; Are You Ready?

On February 17, 2009, all television stations will broadcast digitally instead of the traditional analog waves. Americans who do not have a digital TV or subscribe to a cable, satellite or other pay service will be affected.

However, consumers may purchase a TV converter box that will allow them to continue using an analog TV to receive digital broadcasts. To help offset the cost of the converter boxes for consumers, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration is offering the TV Converter Box Coupon Program.

All households are eligible for up to two \$40 coupons. You can apply online, call toll-free, or register via mail or fax. Applications are accepted until March 31, 2009. Coupons expire 90 days after they have been mailed and cannot be replaced or reissued.

For more information, visit www.DTV2009.gov or call 1-888-DTV-2009.

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Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What is the Viewfinder?

A: VISTA means view-looking out on a broad expanse. The viewfinder, a toy that all generations of VISTAs recognize, was a kind of binocular that focused on points of interest, highlights, and snapshots in living color. The VISTA Viewfinder surveys in the landscape and zeroes in on service.

Q. Why the Viewfinder?

A. Here's your direct link to connecting with other VISTAs, learning what they are doing, and helping to spread the message of VISTA and national service!

Q. How can I contribute?

A. Have a story to tell? Submission ideas? Contact vistaoutreach@cns.gov. Use the Viewfinder to highlight your VISTA service and share your experiences with others across the country!

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